

August 8, 2019

CONDUCT OF DATA-BASED CASE REVIEWS OF OPIOID-EXPOSED PATIENTS WITH RISK FACTORS

1. VHA is committed to enhancing the safe and efficacious care of patients who are exposed to opioid drugs. Deploying risk mitigation strategies or modifying treatment plans for opioid-exposed patients at elevated risk of experiencing an adverse event can reduce the likelihood of these events and improve patient outcomes.

2. This VHA notice maintains policy on implementation of Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) case reviews, and Title IX, Subtitle A, Section 911(a)(2) of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA) (Public Law 114-198). These case reviews must be documented in the medical record using a note title or titles, or a health factor, that include the terms “Opioid Risk Review” and “Data-based”. Completion and documentation of case reviews is required for the following two groups of patients:

a. Patients identified as being in the “Very High – Opioid Prescription” risk category for an overdose or suicide-related event by the Stratification Tool for Opioid Risk Mitigation (STORM) must receive a case review by an interdisciplinary opioid risk review team, the VA medical facility “opioid risk review team.”

b. Patients being considered for new opioid prescriptions, before initiating opioid therapy, must receive a case review by the VA health care provider who would initiate the prescription at the point of care.

3. Detailed background, implementation instructions, and monitoring plans regarding this notice are available at:

https://spsites.cdw.va.gov/sites/OMHO_PsychPharm/_vti_bin/ReportServer?https://spsites.cdw.va.gov/sites/OMHO_PsychPharm/AnalyticsReports/STORM/Memo.rdl&rs:Command=Render&rs:Format=PDF. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.*

4. A recorded presentation providing an overview of the STORM reports and requirements of this notice is available at:

<https://vaww.portal2.va.gov/sites/PERC/STORM/SitePages/STORM%20Monthly%20Call.aspx>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.* In addition, an ongoing monthly call accredited for continuing education addresses various aspects of implementation. Calls are recorded and available at the site listed in this paragraph. A listserv, VHASTORM@va.gov, facilitates information sharing about implementation. The STORM implementation team is available at V21PALSTORMteam@va.gov for technical assistance with the STORM reports, to add people to the listserv, or to assist with developing strategies and processes for case review.

5. VA medical facility Directors and other appropriate VA medical facility leadership should facilitate implementation of case reviews by:

a. Ensuring that the STORM implementation team at V21PALSTORMteam@va.gov has up-to-date names and contact information for the designated contact person or team of people at each VA medical facility for this initiative (STORM POCs). The STORM POCs will receive information about updates and trainings on STORM and opioid risk mitigation and may be contacted for qualitative information about their local implementation at the VA medical facility. The current list of STORM POCs is maintained at:

<https://vaww.portal2.va.gov/sites/PERC/STORM/Resource%20Library/STORM%20POCs.xlsx>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.*

b. Ensuring that the VA medical facility opioid risk review team has interdisciplinary representation and adequate time dedicated to complete the case reviews and follow-up required in paragraph 2.a. Year 1 of the “very high” risk reviews focused on setting up processes at the VA medical facility level for case reviews on a limited population of the highest risk patients. Goals for this year focus on expansion of the established review process to the broader population of high-risk patients. The expectation is that this goal will take longer to achieve compared to year 1 goals and will require additional resourcing of interdisciplinary opioid risk review teams.

c. Ensuring local training of VA health care providers and point of contact staff on the requirements to conduct reviews of risk factors before initiating opioid therapy, per paragraph 2.b., as well as adequate time to conduct the reviews. Staff training may be developed locally, use national training materials, or a combination. National materials are located here:

<https://vaww.portal2.va.gov/sites/PERC/STORM/SitePages/Supporting%20Materials.aspx>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.*

d. Requiring that a Clinical Application Coordinator (CAC) at the VA medical facility maintain note templates or health factors that include “Opioid Risk Review” and “Data-based” in the title.

6. Questions regarding this VHA notice should be directed to Dr. Friedhelm Sandbrink, National Program Director for Pain Management, VHA, at Friedhelm.Sandbrink@va.gov or the STORM implementation team at V21PALSTORMteam@va.gov.

7. VHA Notice 2018-08, Conduct of Data-Based Case Reviews of Patients with Opioid-Related Risk Factors, dated March 8, 2018, is rescinded.

8. This VHA notice will be archived as of August 31, 2020.

August 8, 2019

VHA NOTICE 2019-15

**BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF
THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:**

/s/ Lucille B. Beck, PhD.
Deputy Under Secretary for Health for
Policy and Services

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